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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2100 (2013), by which the Council established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and requested me to periodically update it on the situation in Mali and the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The present report covers the period from 22 December 2013 to 24 March 2014.

II. Political process

2. Since my previous report of 2 January 2014 (S/2014/1), Mali has progressed further in the restoration of constitutional order, as evidenced by the inauguration of the National Assembly in January. In addition, the Government and armed groups participated in informal seminars held in February under the auspices of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, raising hope of progress towards cantonment and inclusive peace talks more than four months after the stalling of the process initiated by the preliminary agreement to the presidential election and the inclusive peace talks in Mali.

3. On 31 December, the Constitutional Court announced the final results of the legislative elections. The party of the President, the Rassemblement pour le Mali, fell short of an absolute majority, winning 66 of 147 seats. An opposition party, the Union pour la république et la démocratie, secured 18 seats, while the Alliance pour la démocratie au Mali won 16 seats. Fourteen women were elected. On 22 January, the National Assembly convened its first session and elected Issaka Sidibé, a member of the Rassemblement pour le Mali, as Speaker by 115 votes to 11. On 29 January, legislators adopted new rules of procedure that were validated by the Constitutional Court on 7 February, increasing the number of parliamentarians required to form a parliamentary group from 5 to 10. Five such groups were formed.

4. On 26 February, the Government extended the mandates of mayors and municipal councils until 27 October 2014 and postponed the municipal elections originally scheduled for April 2014 by six months, indicating that more time was required to implement reforms of local governance structures.

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Dialogue and reconciliation

5. As noted in my previous report, the parties made limited progress during the last quarter of 2013 in pursuing discussions within the framework designed in the preliminary agreement. There were, however, some encouraging developments during the reporting period in the wake of the statement by the President of the Security Council of 23 January (S/PRST/2014/2) and the visit of the Council to Mali (1-3 February).

6. The President of Mali, Boubacar Keita, began 2014 with bilateral meetings with the authorities of neighbouring countries, including on negotiations with the armed groups in the north of Mali. Algeria facilitated exploratory discussions with those groups, notably the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad, the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance and the Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA), which led to the signing, on 16 January, of a cooperation platform for lasting peace in northern Mali. That initiative was followed by a visit by the President of Mali to Algiers on 18 and 19 January, during which the two Heads of State agreed to reinforce cooperation between the two countries in such areas as security, development and humanitarian assistance and to put in place a bilateral committee that would meet monthly to monitor the implementation of the decision pertaining to the peaceful settlement of the problem of north Mali. On 1 February, the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, hosted a delegation from the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) led by its Secretary-General, Bilal ag Cherif. From 19 to 23 February, the King made a State visit to Mali to discuss bilateral efforts to sustain peace and reconciliation and to strengthen economic ties. The President of Mali also visited Mauritania from 10 to 12 January.

7. During the visit by the Security Council to Mali, the Government unveiled elements of a road map to end the crisis. The document set out the following preparatory activities for the launch of the inclusive dialogue: three workshops (proposed in September by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee with a view to building trust among the parties and finding a basis for an agreed way forward regarding formal inclusive peace talks), consultations with civil society, exploratory discussions under the auspices of Algeria and consultations with communities in the north.

8. MINUSMA facilitated the organization of the three workshops shortly after the visit of the Security Council. More than 50 participants attended, including representatives of the Government, local authorities, armed groups and civil society, in addition to members of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. The workshops held on 13 and 14 February focused on lessons learned from past peace processes and cantonment. The latter resulted in the adoption, on 18 February, of a technical document, signed by the representatives of all armed groups, the Government and the international community, in which the steps necessary to further the cantonment process were outlined. On 13 March, a third workshop focused on the return of State administration and basic services to the north. The parties having identified a need to evaluate the implementation of the preliminary agreement to date, MINUSMA facilitated another session, on 14 March, at which the participants established four working groups tasked with making recommendations for confidence-building measures, cantonment, return of State administration and basic services and the next steps for the inclusive dialogue, respectively. The preliminary conclusions of the working groups were shared with

the Government and participants on 20 March. Reactions are expected in the next two weeks, following consultations.

9. Meanwhile, on 18 March, a group of individuals, including MNLA dissidents, launched the Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad, a new movement headed by the former head of external relations for MNLA and its representative on the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh. He had earlier announced his intention to form a new movement.

10. On 15 January, the Government established a truth, justice and reconciliation commission mandated to investigate major human rights violations between 1960 and 2013, foster reconciliation and consolidate national unity and democratic values. Established for three years, it replaces the National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation established under the transition road map of 2013. Civil society and human rights organizations raised concerns about the independence, functioning and inclusiveness of the Commission, given that it was established and the process for selecting yet-to-be appointed commissioners was conducted without consultation with political parties or civil society. On 20 March, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a bill to ratify the ordinance creating the Commission. Before the vote, the parliamentary committee on constitutional laws, legislation, justice and the institutions of Mali shared observations relating to the structure and independence of the Commission. The Government gave assurances to the Commission that those observations would be taken into consideration in the decree on the implementation of the ordinance by the Cabinet.

11. On 25 February, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family and the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Development of the North co-organized, with the support of MINUSMA, a two-day regional forum on women attended by 1,000 delegates, including representatives of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger. The forum established a monitoring committee to oversee the socioeconomic reinsertion of women and children affected by the conflict and recommended that the Government should increase the participation of women in the political process.

III. Security and stabilization

A. Security situation

12. During the reporting period, the overall security situation deteriorated in northern Mali as a result of the increasing activity of terrorist groups, mainly Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest, as exemplified by a series of rocket and improvised explosive device attacks targeting the Malian armed forces, MINUSMA and Operation Serval. The security situation remained particularly worrisome in Kidal, but rocket attacks also increased around Gao. Timbuktu suffered its first rocket attack after a period of relative calm. On 8 February, Bamako experienced its first alert for a possible vehicle-borne improvised explosive device.

13. While the number of rocket attacks increased notably since my previous report, no casualties were sustained. A total of 25 rockets were launched in 12 attacks in the vicinity of MINUSMA, Operation Serval and/or Malian armed

forces premises in northern Mali. More than 10 unexploded rockets were also discovered on launching sites. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest claimed responsibility for several of the attacks. In addition, on 20 February, an Operation Serval helicopter patrolling the Tigargar desert (north-east of Tessalit) came under fire, slightly wounding a soldier. In the face of the increased rocket attacks, the Mission has launched compound protection works and adapted its plans for the future United Nations premises in the north.

14. On 28 December, a joint patrol by MINUSMA and Operation Serval in the area of Timetrine, Kidal region, 150 km south-west of Tessalit, discovered a weapons cache containing 700 kg of ammonium nitrate and 46 grenades. The material, which appeared to have been abandoned, was destroyed on the same day. On 29 December, a similar cache containing 5 tons of ammonium nitrate was discovered, and subsequently destroyed, 10 km south of the first site. The French forces indicated that it was the second-largest weapons cache discovery since the beginning of Operation Serval, a sign that terrorist groups continue to have the means to conduct large-scale operations.

15. Amid an increased fragmentation of armed groups, in particular MNLA, terrorist groups abducted, assassinated and ambushed MNLA and HCUA supporters in the Kidal region between 13 and 19 January. During the night of 13 to 14 January, a HCUA vehicle was ambushed on the road to Aguelhok, some 100 km from Kidal, and a HCUA member allegedly killed. In the early hours of 14 January, a MNLA senior political representative, Abounahiya Ag Attayoub, was kidnapped by armed men at his residence in Tessalit. His family later reported that Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb had announced that he had died of sickness on 14 January. On 17 January, a local MNLA chief was assassinated in Talhandak. On 19 January, another MNLA fighter was allegedly abducted from a camp near Abeibara and executed.

16. Abductions and banditry contributed to perpetrating a climate of fear in northern Mali. Four civilians were reportedly abducted in Kidal region in February. On 8 February, five persons, including four national staff members of the International Committee of the Red Cross, were kidnapped while travelling from Anefis to Gao. The Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest later claimed responsibility. Meanwhile, armed banditry continued to plague the principal transportation routes in the north. On 17 February, some 300 miners left the Taoudenni salt mine, 800 km north of Timbuktu, for Timbuktu after being threatened by unidentified armed men.

17. The incidence of improvised explosive device attacks increased during the reporting period. On 20 January, a MINUSMA patrol hit a device on the road to Aguelhok in Kidal region, injuring five Chadian peacekeepers. On 14 February, livestock triggered a device at a site regularly used by MINUSMA, close to Tessalit, Kidal region. On 26 February, a vehicle belonging to an international non-governmental organization hit a device while parking alongside the Kidal airstrip, seriously wounding a passenger and slightly injuring the driver. On 9 March, a Malian armed forces patrol struck a device in the region of Gao, injuring five of its members. On 11 March, an Operation Serval vehicle hit a device near Aguelhok, slightly injuring a passenger. On 16 March, a MINUSMA convoy hit a device close to Aguelhok, injuring two Chadian peacekeepers.

18. Intercommunal violence between the Tuareg and the Fulani in Gao region worsened during the reporting period. According to a survivor of an attack that took place on 6 February near Tamkoutak (about 120 km north-east of Gao), a group of Tuareg returning from a trade fair were ambushed by armed Fulani on 30 motorcycles. MINUSMA sent a military detachment and a human rights fact-finding mission that reported that 24 Tuareg had been killed at the scene and another had died later of injuries sustained in the attack. On 7 and 8 February, MINUSMA received reports of possible reprisal attacks further south in the region, with two victims receiving treatment at Gao hospital reporting fighting on 7 February in Tin Hama commune, Ansongo area. Confrontations also reportedly broke out on 8 February in nearby Amalaoulaou, about 180 km south-east of Gao (near the border between Mali and the Niger). The Malian armed forces reported clashes during the night of 9 to 10 February between Fulani and Tuareg in Akabar, south-west of Ménaka, also close to the border with the Niger. On 11 February, the Malian armed forces reported discovering the bodies of 17 Tuareg killed in Akabar.

19. The Malian armed forces continued to redeploy to the north, with the European Union Training Mission in Mali completing the training of a fourth battalion during the reporting period. Efforts to increase the presence of the armed forces in the north notwithstanding, some areas — for example, Taoudenni, 800 km north of Timbuktu, Abeibara and Tinessako, north-east and east of Kidal, respectively, and more generally the borders with Algeria and the Niger — are not yet covered.

20. Within its current capacity, MINUSMA has taken measures to contribute to a more secure environment in key population centres in the north. The Mission's military and police personnel conduct day and night patrols in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal and carry out long-range patrols in surrounding areas. The Mission's ability to proactively protect civilians and deter attacks remains limited, however, given the lack of manoeuvre units, key enablers and force multipliers such as military transport helicopters.

B. Mine action

21. On 21 February, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) completed the refurbishment of a training facility near Bamako. It will begin training the explosive ordnance disposal companies from Cambodia and Nepal in March. The seven-week course includes evaluation, planning and conduct of clearance operations, technical training in the use of bomb disposal and other specialized equipment procured by the United Nations and essential medical training.

22. In addition, UNMAS coordinated and tasked eight explosive ordnance disposal teams with the surveying, marking and clearing of dangerous areas in the Mopti, Ségou, Timbuktu and Gao regions. Since 22 December, 228 villages have been surveyed and 87 items of unexploded ordinance and 2,830 items of small arms ammunition destroyed, including through a pilot programme with a local mine action operator in Kidal.

23. On 10 January, UNMAS handed over explosive ordnance disposal equipment to the Malian armed forces following the completion of their training by the European Union Training Mission. The equipment, the first of its kind in their possession, will allow the armed forces to carry out explosive ordnance disposal

operations in the north. At the request of the armed forces, UNMAS initiated, on 27 March, the destruction of more than 10,000 weapons and some 60 tons of obsolete ammunition, an operation that will exceed the explosive ordnance disposal capacity of the armed forces but be undertaken in conjunction with trainees as part of practical capacity-building. In early March, 21 armed forces personnel began 12 weeks of training in weapons and ammunition inspection at the Gendarmerie Training Centre in Bamako and 20 others followed with a four-week, level one training course in explosive ordnance disposal at the Humanitarian Demining Training Centre in Benin.

C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

24. During the reporting period, the cantonment and disarmament of armed groups in the north made no progress, given that no meetings of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee and the Mixed Technical Commission on Security have been held since October 2013. The parties were unable to overcome disagreements on the interpretation of the preliminary agreement and the inclusion of the adherent groups, the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad and the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance, in the process. Meanwhile, MINUSMA continued to provide logistical support, food and water to three pilot pre-cantonment sites in the Kidal region for 1,847 adult men listed by MNLA and HCUA, as earlier agreed by the Mixed Technical Commission on Security.

25. On 10 February, the Government and the Peacebuilding Support Office endorsed a Peacebuilding Fund project in the amount of $3 million that will enable the implementing partner, the United Nations Office for Project Services, to begin the construction and ensure the full functioning of the above-mentioned pilot pre-cantonment sites. The project also aims at building confidence between the Government and the armed groups, creating space for further political dialogue.

26. On 18 February, four days after the above-mentioned cantonment workshop (see para. 8), the Government and the signatory armed groups, MNLA and HCUA, in addition to the adherent armed groups, the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad and the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance, signed a document reflecting a common understanding of the operational modalities for cantonment by all parties and identifying roles, responsibilities and mechanisms for implementation. On 14 March, during discussions in the context of the working groups referred to in paragraph 8, the parties discussed the modalities for conducting reconnaissance and validation visits of the cantonment sites, the establishment of a coordination cell, security arrangements inside and outside the cantonment sites and a timeline for the implementation of the arrangements.

IV. Re-establishment of State authority

27. While the governors of Kidal, Timbuktu, Mopti and Gao and all 135 prefects and subprefects have returned to the four northern regions, few prefects and subprefects, gendarmes or police officers have taken up posts outside the principal towns owing to the security conditions and the lack of infrastructure and resources, leaving significant gaps in State authority in rural areas. In Kidal, for example, the risk of terrorist attacks against government institutions remained high and

gendarmes and police officers were mostly confined to their camps, while 17 prefects and subprefects assigned to the region remained based in Kidal city.

A. Security sector reform

28. On 30 December, under the auspices of the President, the Minister of Internal Security and Civil Protection presided over the official launch of a multidisciplinary working group on security sector reform, which was tasked with, within three months, developing elements of a national vision for the security sector reform process, making recommendations on implementation processes and structures for the reform at the national and sectoral levels and identifying national mechanisms and international partners for funding the reform process. On 19 February, the President announced that the Government would soon introduce a bill for the funding of the defence sector reform process, which would be submitted to the National Assembly for approval.

29. The multidisciplinary working group on security sector reform first met on 6 January and established three subgroups: one on the elements of the national vision for security sector reform; one on the process and structures of the reform; and the third on resource mobilization mechanisms for the reform. They presented their progress reports on 5 March during the sixth plenary session of the working group, chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection. During a meeting on 19 March, the Secretary-General of the Ministry indicated that the update had been shared with the Government, which was expected to make a midterm report available by 2 April. The Government indicated that it would subsequently convene a national convention on security with the aim of reviewing and validating the vision, architecture and resource mobilization elements and officially launching the security sector reform process.

B. Law enforcement, justice and corrections institutions

30. Since my previous report, the presence of justice and corrections personnel in the north has remained limited, with only a number of modest steps forward. The two higher-instance courts in Gao and Timbuktu reopened on 3 and 12 February, respectively, followed in the same month by the reopening of the two main prisons there. At the same time, significant challenges remain, given that 11 courts and 11 prisons in Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu have yet to reopen. Only 60 of 104 judicial officers (magistrates, prosecutors and registrars) have returned to the four regions of the north, while only 51 of an estimated 204 penitentiary system posts are occupied. In Kidal, the redeployment of judicial and corrections authorities continued to be hindered by insecurity. In the absence of credible and functional penal institutions, disputes continued to be settled through traditional mechanisms.

31. On 23 January, the Ministry of Justice, MINUSMA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union established a technical working group that meets weekly as part of efforts to re-establish justice institutions in the north. MINUSMA and the Ministry continued to carry out needs assessments of judicial and corrections facilities in the north. Existing corrections facilities were found to be inadequate owing to the lack of medical supplies, poor water drainage systems and, most critically, the absence of any distinction between pretrial and

sentenced inmates and the lack of separate premises for juvenile male and female inmates. At the same time, MINUSMA and UNDP launched a joint project aimed at rehabilitating and providing equipment to four courthouses, four prefectures, two gendarmerie barracks and a police station in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

32. From 16 to 21 February, MINUSMA, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and the International Institute of Human Rights organized a workshop on international criminal law and human rights law to strengthen the capacity of the Malian judicial authorities. Some 100 Malian judicial and law enforcement officials attended, along with 50 participants from 17 countries.

33. A total of 1,211 gendarmes and police officers have been deployed to the north to date, compared with 469 before the crisis. That increase follows the redeployment programme established by the Malian authorities to transfer law and order responsibilities from the armed forces to law enforcement institutions. Eleven MINUSMA police trainers based at the police and gendarmerie training schools recently refurbished by MINUSMA trained 848 police officers and gendarmes during the reporting period.

V. Human rights and protection of civilians

A. Human rights

34. MINUSMA continued to document serious human rights violations and abuses by elements of the Malian armed forces and by armed groups in the northern regions. On 19 February, three civilians were arrested, tied up, summarily executed and buried in a mass grave, allegedly by elements of the Malian forces deployed in Djebock (Gao region). The authorities have opened an investigation into this case.

35. MINUSMA continued to observe a growing trend of arrest and detention of members of the Tuareg and Arab communities on suspicion of alleged collaboration with the armed groups during the crisis. Between 1 January and 12 March, the Mission documented 63 new arrests (48 in Gao and 15 in Timbuktu) of individuals suspected of being members of armed groups. There is concern that such arrests may result in the stigmatization of such communities and therefore affect the reconciliation process. Of the 481 individuals arrested on conflict-related charges since April 2013, 94 remain detained, awaiting trial, in Bamako, Gao and Timbuktu. MINUSMA maintains nationwide access to all detention facilities except those under the control of State security in Bamako.

36. On 13 and 14 February, four former junta leaders were arrested and charged, some with murder and abduction and others with complicity to murder and abduction, in relation to the disappearance and summary execution of 25 soldiers following the counter-coup d'état of April 2012. On 24 February, five bodies dressed in military attire were found in a grave in the vicinity of the Kati military camp (20 km from Bamako). Another body was found in a well near the camp on 1 March.

37. From 17 to 26 February, MINUSMA supported the second visit of the United Nations Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali. He welcomed the positive steps taken by the Malian authorities to address the human rights violations committed by the former junta and underlined the importance of

accountability for the violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by the parties since the beginning of the conflict in the north of the country.

38. During the reporting period, the judiciary failed to move forward on criminal investigations into several key human rights cases, such as the incidents of intercommunal violence of 6-8 February in Gao. No specific progress has been made to date regarding the implementation of article 18 of the preliminary agreement, which provides for the creation of an international commission of inquiry to investigate grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed in the country.

B. Protection of civilians

39. In addition to the regular military and police patrols coordinated with the Malian armed forces and Operation Serval, MINUSMA carried out short-range and long-range (multi-day) patrols in rural areas marked by or at risk of violence. It also carried out integrated assessment visits with civilian, military and police personnel to high-risk areas to identify sources of tension and recommend conflict-management responses for MINUSMA and the national authorities. For example, MINUSMA conducted a three-day visit to Léré and Lerneb, near the Mauritanian border, from 17 to 21 February to gather information on the political, security and human rights situation. The visit underscored the need for MINUSMA to strengthen its presence in that sensitive area.

40. The Mission also developed integrated mechanisms to respond to tension and violence between communities in the north. MINUSMA force, police and civilian components have set up a joint task force capable of rapid deployment for extended periods to areas at risk of intercommunal violence, beginning in the Gao-Ménaka zone. The intercommunal violence between Imghad Tuareg and Fulani that killed at least 25 Tuareg on 6 February is the result of a complex set of factors, including long-standing tensions between the communities, augmented by economic and humanitarian hardship, the limited presence of the State and the presence of armed groups and terrorist organizations. Although MINUSMA continued to have a limited military, civilian and police presence in the areas concerned, it organized a multidimensional response to help to prevent additional reprisals, working with the Government and the communities to develop conflict-management strategies. From 17 to 19 March, the Governments of Mali and the Niger organized a meeting of community leaders of both countries in an effort to address long-standing intercommunal tension and foster reconciliation.

C. Child protection

41. MINUSMA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have urged the Government of Mali to release detained children immediately and transfer them to the UNICEF-supported transit and care centre and to drop all security and terrorism charges against children. On 28 February, a court dropped terrorism charges against three boys who had been released from detention in August 2013 and were in temporary care at the centre, allowing them to be reunited with their families. Four boys have been reunited with their families since my previous report, for a total of

16 since 1 October 2013. Ten boys formerly associated with armed groups remained in the centre as at 12 March.

42. At the same time, in spite of the continued advocacy by the United Nations notwithstanding, nine boys remained in detention in Bamako on security and terrorism charges (three at the central prison, another two in the high-security section of the prison and four at Gendarmerie Camp 1). In addition, two male detainees in the high-security section of the prison claimed that they were children upon their arrest in October 2011 and January 2012, respectively. They spent 11 months in detention at the State security premises, where they claim to have been tortured, before being transferred to the prison.

VI. Early recovery and development

43. The delivery of basic social services such as health, water and electricity improved during the reporting period. For example, the electricity supply in the north was enhanced, although it does not allow for permanent distribution everywhere. In Gao city, electricity is available for between 18 and 24 hours per day, compared with 17 hours in Timbuktu city. In Kidal city, MINUSMA is supporting the delivery of electricity for between four and five hours per day.

44. Seven new projects totalling $3.2 million were approved by the project review committee for the Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security in Mali managed by MINUSMA. They include projects to support the redeployment of State administration, including rehabilitation of key facilities in the north, and to support mediation and reconciliation efforts. Of the $11 million pledged, $9,418,715 has been committed. Among projects currently under discussion with the Government is one to provide electricity in Kidal in partnership with the Governorate of Kidal, the electricity company and competent ministries.

45. MINUSMA approved seven new quick-impact projects in the amount of some $330,000 during the reporting period. The implementation of previously approved projects continued. Quick-impact projects strengthened the Mission's relationship with local communities and contributed to the implementation of Mission priorities, including the further rehabilitation and return of State functions in the north and the restoration of gendarmerie and police stations in Timbuktu, Gao, Niafunké and Goundam, as well as advanced economic opportunities for and livelihoods of the local population, through the rehabilitation of water and lighting facilities and the provision of support to income-generating activities by women's associations in the Gao and Timbuktu regions.

46. In the region of Timbuktu, United Nations agencies, including UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, have initiated a joint programme on youth and resilience to create employment opportunities for young people and vulnerable groups through microfinance schemes, cash-for-work programmes and other income-generating activities, with a total budget of $5 million to be mobilized. Projects launched to date include a youth centre that is being rehabilitated with the involvement of young people from Timbuktu and an economic opportunities study undertaken with a focus on youth employment opportunities in the region.

47. On 11 February, the Ministry of Culture and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization conducted a joint assessment mission to Gao. The experts found that the Tomb of Askia, a World Heritage site, would require major conservation work before the coming rainy season to prevent further deterioration. The work is to be conducted by the local community and earthen architecture conservation specialists as from May. On 14 March, during a ceremony in Timbuktu to mark the official launch of reconstruction work on the heritage of Mali, UNESCO presented its strategy for the reconstruction of the mausoleums, setting out the activities to be undertaken over the coming four years to ensure the complete rehabilitation of the damaged sites. In January, MINUSMA provided logistical support for the return to Timbuktu of personnel from the Ahmed Baba Centre for Documentation and Research in charge of researching and preserving the country's ancient manuscripts.

48. Integration efforts by MINUSMA with the United Nations country team continued on the basis of a joint action plan that serves as an integrated strategic framework. A monitoring and evaluation mechanism has been formulated so as to jointly assess results on a monthly basis. The development of joint programmes is under discussion with a view to ensuring coherence and realizing clear gains in the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations action. The MINUSMA and UNDP rule of law activities are closely coordinated under the global focal point arrangement. In the region of Timbuktu, MINUSMA and UNDP have launched a coordinated rule of law initiative to rehabilitate courthouses, gendarmeries, police station and prisons.

49. Economic recovery picked up in 2013, with estimated growth of 5.1 per cent, and a projection of 6.2 per cent for 2014, largely owing to the revitalization of activities in the industrial (especially construction) and tertiary (transport, communication, trade, hotels) sectors. The recent agricultural season, however, was poor compared with previous years, in particular in terms of cereal production, which may lead to a downward revision of growth estimates.

VII. Humanitarian situation

50. Food insecurity and malnutrition remain a major concern in Mali. Data from malnutrition surveys project that 500,000 children under the age of 5 will suffer from acute malnutrition in 2014, 136,000 of whom from the most severe form. Overall, as at the end of March, 3.3 million people were food insecure, including 970,000 who were severely affected. While the financial requirement for the nutrition response in 2014 is $77 million, donors had, as at 12 March, made no pledges towards the nutrition sector.

51. The strategic response plan for Mali was launched on 26 February, aiming to mobilize $568 million to meet identified humanitarian and early recovery needs. The increase from $477 million in 2013 was mainly due to the inclusion of early recovery and increased needs in the food security sector. It is part of a broader three-year strategic humanitarian plan for the Sahel that aims to strengthen the resilience capacity of the region's population and better address the root causes of cyclical food security and nutrition crises.

52. Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger continue to host some 170,000 Malian refugees registered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (compared with 177,000 at the height of displacement in May 2013). According to the International Organization for Migration displacement tracking matrix, there were nearly 200,000 internally displaced persons in Mali as at 18 February, some 150,000 less than at the peak of displacement in 2012. Internally displaced persons are returning to urban centres in the north, but are reluctant to return to their homes in rural areas.

53. Access to water has been affected, in particular in Kidal where the activities of the water utility were seriously disrupted by the lack of maintenance of infrastructure and the absence of technical staff. In response, UNICEF and its partners rehabilitated eight boreholes in Kidal city. Access to water has largely been restored in Gao and Timbuktu regions.

54. More than 167,000 pupils have been able to return to school in the conflict-affected areas, representing 83 per cent of school-age children enrolled before the crisis. As at 29 January, UNICEF had provided assistance to 115,000 pupils in the north. To date, more than 72 per cent of northern schools have reopened, an increase of 20 per cent compared with the 2012-2013 school year. Schools in the Kidal region, however, remained severely affected by the continuing insecurity and the lack of teachers, with only 5 per cent of schools having reopened since March 2012. Some 88 per cent of the northern health facilities are functional, mostly with support provided by humanitarian organizations, compared with 77 per cent during the previous reporting period. By 31 December, 7,191,552 children had been vaccinated, reaching 100 per cent coverage in all regions except Kidal (62 per cent).

VIII. Establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

55. As at 18 March, the military strength of MINUSMA stood at 6,443 personnel, including 50 women, or 57 per cent of the authorized strength of 11,200. In view of the stable security situation south of the river Niger and the volatile situation in key locations in the north, MINUSMA is reconsidering the force layout to enhance its projection along the Mauritanian border and in Gao and Kidal regions.

56. An additional 865 troops, including a second level II hospital, were deployed during the reporting period. The engineering capacity of the Mission was enhanced with the arrival of a construction engineer company, an airfield engineer company and two explosive ordnance disposal companies. The advance party and the contingent-owned equipment of an infantry battalion, two signal companies, an engineer company, a riverine unit and a transport company have already arrived in Mali. An additional infantry battalion, a reserve battalion and a military police company, although identified, have yet to be deployed. Engineering works for the construction of the Gao camps are under way. Letters of assist for the extension of runways in Gao and Timbuktu and for the horizontal construction of modularized bases in Gao, Kidal and Tessalit were signed on 12 March. In addition, the contract for the construction of the modularized base in Timbuktu was signed on 19 March; mobilization activities have begun for the construction to start in mid-April.

57. The Mission's insufficient medical capability and air mobility remain of concern. The Mission relies on Operation Serval forces for medical evacuations and for the provision of on-call close air support. To date, MINUSMA has no military

helicopters, which are essential force multipliers, and no medical evacuation enablers. I intend to explore the possibility of sourcing these critical assets through inter-mission cooperation in accordance with paragraph 14 of resolution 2100 (2013), as a temporary measure until the Mission's own military helicopter capabilities have been deployed.

58. The transfer of equipment sourced by the Trust Fund in Support of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali continued during the reporting period, with eight vehicles and 96 containers of field defence stores, accommodation units, generators and other supplies. The provision of such equipment is enhancing the overall logistical capacity of former military and police personnel of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, although they continue to face significant self-sustainment challenges.

59. The Mission's police strength has held steady since my previous report. As at 5 March, 957 police personnel, including 50 women, of the authorized total of 1,440 had been deployed, comprising 73 individual police officers (23 per cent of the authorized 320) and 884 formed police unit elements (of the authorized 1,120). Efforts are under way to address the recruitment backlog of individual police officers through the prioritization of specific skill sets. Six of the eight authorized formed police units are currently deployed.

60. The Mission has filled 365 of its authorized 672 international civilian posts, including 121 women (33 per cent of international civilian staff on board), 64 of its 145 authorized United Nations volunteer positions, with 27 female United Nations volunteers (42 per cent of United Nations volunteer positions), and 216 of its authorized 781 national posts, with 66 female national staff on board amounting to 30 per cent of national staff as at 18 March.

IX. International coordination

61. The Prime Minister of Mali and other ministers, representatives of the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, the African Union and other major bilateral and multilateral partners took part in the second follow-up meeting to the Donor Conference for Development in Mali, held in Brussels on 5 February. The participants reaffirmed the importance of an inclusive dialogue between the Malian authorities and northern armed groups and communities to achieve sustainable peace and development in Mali.

62. On 16 February, the Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger established what is known as the "Group of Five for the Sahel" to reinforce cooperation on security challenges in the region. On 17 February, the African Union, the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, the United Nations Office for West Africa and MINUSMA sent senior representatives to the fourth meeting of the heads of intelligence and security services of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region, held in Niamey. The participants exchanged views on ways to further enhance security cooperation and build capacity to fight terrorism and cross-border crime and stressed that there was a risk that terrorist groups could exacerbate institutional weaknesses and intercommunal tensions, in particular in northern Mali.

63. The third ministerial meeting on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region was held in Niamey on 19 February. While welcoming the progress made in the implementation of the preliminary agreement, especially the recent progress on cantonment, the participants urged the Malian parties to continue efforts within the framework established under the preliminary agreement and encouraged all relevant partners to continue to lend their support to the Government of Mali and other stakeholders, on the basis of national ownership and leadership.

X. Financial aspects

64. The General Assembly, by its resolution 68/259, appropriated the amount of $602 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, inclusive of the amount of $366.8 million previously authorized for the Mission for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2013 under the terms of its resolution 67/286.

65. As at 21 March 2014, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for MINUSMA amounted to $215.4 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,568.5 million.

66. As at 21 March 2014, reimbursement of troop/formed police units costs had been made for the period up to 28 February 2014, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment had been made for the period up to 31 December 2013, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

XI. Observations

67. The near-completion of the return to constitutional order with the inauguration of the National Assembly, the gradual return of State administration to the north and the renewal of informal discussions between the Government and armed groups after a lengthy impasse are encouraging developments. Combined with substantial support from the international community, including MINUSMA and donors, they offer a historic chance for all Malians to overcome the current crisis and achieve a lasting social and political contract with the north. I call upon the Government, the armed groups and all civil society actors to grasp this moment collectively and build on this positive dynamic. The window of opportunity to consolidate and sustain peace and stability in Mali stands wide open, but may also close unless sustained commitment by all stakeholders is upheld.

68. The first priority is a truly inclusive political dialogue, as indicated in Security Council resolution 2100 (2013) and the preliminary agreement. There will be no durable solution to the security challenges in the north without an inclusive political process that paves the way for the full restoration of law and order, equal access by all Malians to public services and reconciliation between communities.

69. It is vital that the full spectrum of Malian society remain involved in this endeavour, including the Government, armed groups and civil society actors, including women's groups. Key players should actively participate in all efforts to chart the next steps towards restoring peace and security and I welcome the recent progress made through the informal seminars facilitated by my Special

Representative. I regret that some armed groups have shown a lack of coherence or declined to fully seize the opportunity presented by the informal discussions to shape the peace process. The next steps will require continued commitment on the part of all stakeholders to engaging in a meaningful and inclusive process, given that the current informal talks must shift to formal negotiations. I urge the Government to launch the formal negotiations without delay and the armed groups and civil society to participate in the interest of peace and security in Mali and the wider region.

70. I welcome the efforts of the Government of Mali to mobilize all segments of civil society, including through the regional forum on women held in Bamako on 25 and 26 February. Communities should have the opportunity to express their expectations and concerns with regard to the re-establishment of State authority and the provision of public services. My Special Representative for Mali, in coordination with ECOWAS and the African Union, the European Union and other key partners, will continue to support such efforts in the framework of Security Council resolution 2100 (2013) and the preliminary agreement.

71. The countries of the region have made significant efforts to support the peace process in Mali. Their role remains crucial. I call upon all regional actors to ensure a coordinated approach and concerted action with the United Nations and in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2100 (2013) and the preliminary agreement to accompany the inclusive talks and negotiations with the signatories to that agreement.

72. I am encouraged that the parties, who are responsible for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, have made progress in defining the modalities for further cantonment. The parties to the preliminary agreement hold primary responsibility for this process. The United Nations will support the process and assist in ensuring the integrity of cantonment and its supervision. I call upon regional and global partners to step up their efforts to assist the parties in the implementation of the process, including through much-needed financial and logistical support.

73. I remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in the north, especially the increased presence and activity of extremist groups. In this context, the continued lack of military transport helicopters for MINUSMA remains a significant concern, given that it hampers the Mission's mobility and emergency-response capabilities in this vast area. I therefore once again urge Member States to accelerate the generation and deployment of helicopters and other key enablers, in addition to troops, for MINUSMA and call upon the international community to provide increased support to the Malian security forces. I wish to thank the French forces for the crucial support extended to MINUSMA and look forward to its continuation in the context of transitional arrangements and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2100 (2013). I further encourage all donors to make unearmarked contributions to the Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security in Mali in line with the resolution.

74. I am deeply concerned by the clashes between communities in the north, particularly in the Gao region. Urgent action is required to prevent such confrontations from escalating. In that regard, I call upon the Malian authorities and local actors to continue to promote dialogue between communities and deploy civilian authorities, including the police, to the rural areas marked by growing

tensions. My Special Representative for Mali and MINUSMA stand ready to support such efforts.

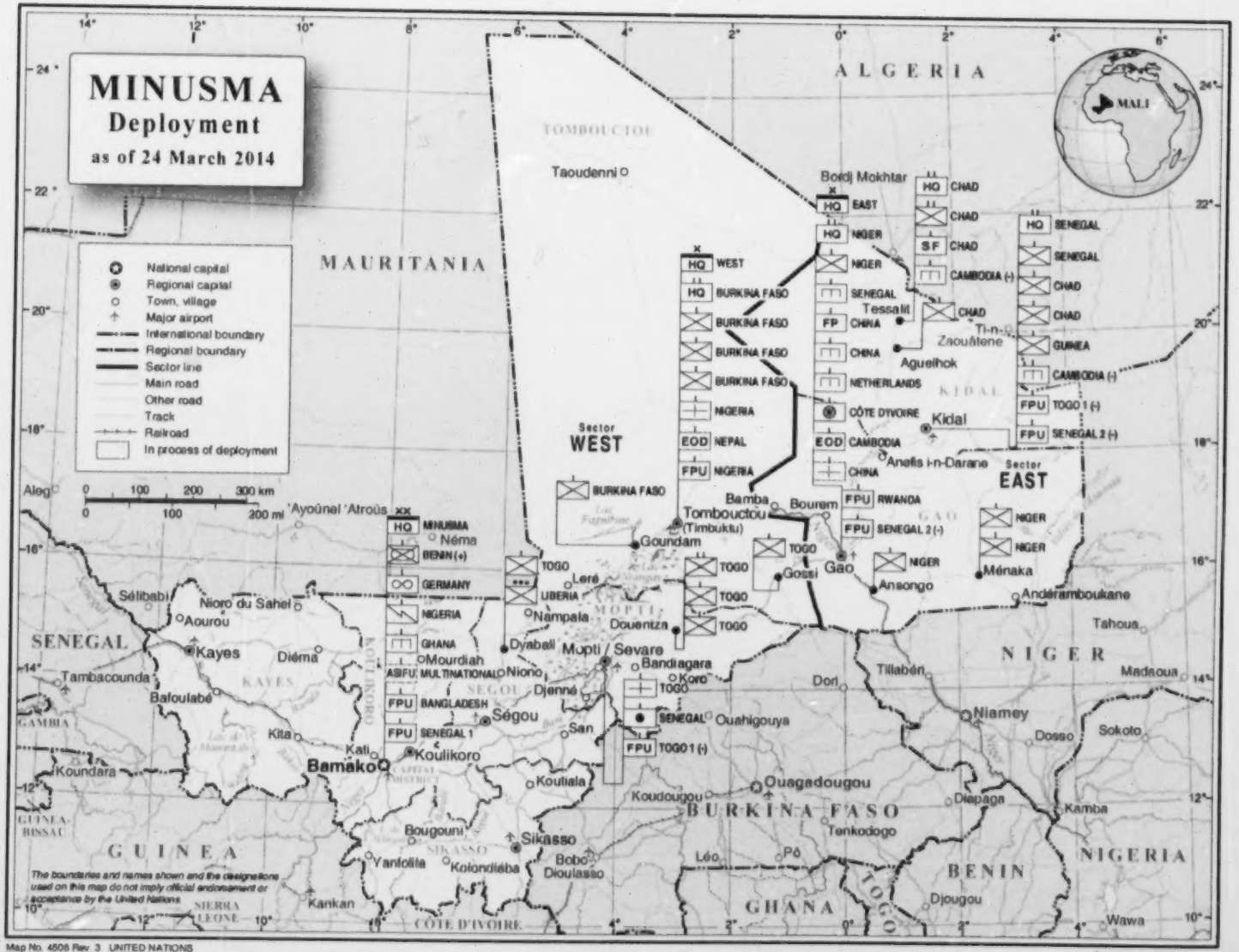
75. The successful conduct of the legislative elections was a remarkable achievement for which I commend the Malian authorities and people. It represented a major milestone for the country, with conditions now conducive to implementing much-needed reforms. I urge the Government and all political stakeholders in the National Assembly to expedite institutional reforms to enhance the legitimacy, transparency and fairness of the national governance, security and judicial systems. In this regard, I welcome the progress made in the launch of the multidisciplinary working group on security sector reform.

76. Although some refugees and internally displaced persons have returned to their areas of origin, I encourage the Government to accelerate inclusive dialogue and local reconciliation and, with support from its partners, to ensure the availability of the humanitarian assistance and basic services needed to facilitate the sustainable return of all displaced Malians to their communities. In this regard, I call upon development partners to support the return of State administration and basic social services in the north and to provide increased assistance to the 3 million individuals affected by food insecurity, including the 500,000 children under the age of 5 suffering from acute malnutrition.

77. The establishment of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission is a welcome development. I call upon the Government to ensure the neutrality, impartiality and independence of that body. The initiation by the judiciary of legal proceedings in relation to the disappearance and summary execution of 25 soldiers in April 2012 is also an encouraging step, as is the investigation into the alleged arbitrary arrest and summary execution of three civilians by elements of the Malian forces on 19 February. I urge the Malian authorities to similarly investigate all reported violations of human rights and international humanitarian law since the beginning of the Malian conflict.

78. I welcome the continued engagement of and support provided by the European Union through the organization of a high-level meeting on the Sahel in Brussels and the second follow-up meeting to the Donor Conference for Development in Mali. I urge the international community to provide financial and political support for the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel in the identified priority areas of governance, security, resilience and regional infrastructure. The continued engagement and coordination of the international community are crucial to aligning our action and to maximizing the impact of our efforts in Mali. The implementation of a final peace agreement and the effectiveness of development spending are directly related and illustrate the close nexus between development and security.

79. Lastly, I should like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative for Mali, Albert Gerard Koenders, for his leadership and steadfast support to the Government and people of Mali, and to all United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel for their commitment to restoring lasting peace and stability in the country. I should also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union and bilateral partners, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations and all other partners for their important contributions to supporting the peace process in Mali.



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